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ABSTRACT

Compiled are materials which describe the Alternative School of the Alachua County, Florida, Public School District, which serves a severely emotionally disturbed population of about 75-85 adolescents. The following materials are included: an introductory letter, which includes information on staff operations and the curriculum framework, given out to parents and supporting agency counselors; a diagram of the educational system for emotionally disturbed children; a list of policy questions frequently asked, many dealing with sensitive and controversial issues which are misunderstood by the media; rules for students at Alternative School; an article titled "Educating Troubled Youth Amid Whirlwind Social Change" by R. Ramsey about the historical background and content of the program; and annual reports of the principal to the superintendent for the school years 1974-75 and 1975-76. (SBH)

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THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Alachua County (Florida) Public Schools

Descriptive Materials Covering the Secondary Center

for

Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents

in

Alachua County, Florida

EC101237

Dr. Russell W. Ramsey
Principal, Alternative School
Alachua County Public Schools

Dr. James W. Longstreth
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Alachua County Public Schools

This booklet is a compilation of materials which describe the Alternative School of the Alachua County, Florida, Public School District. The school serves a severely emotionally disturbed population of about 75-85 adolescents in a district of 23,000 enrolled pupils. There is a sister center for elementary age fulltime emotionally disturbed; another center for trainable mentally retarded pupils; several fulltime classes serving the district at large in the smaller specialized handicap areas; and a wide range of fulltime and resource room classes throughout the district serving the mildly emotionally disturbed, the mentally retarded, and other pupils in the 15 state approved handicap areas.

All exceptional education pupils in the Alachua County Public Schools are identified, tested, and placed in the proper program in strictest accord with state law and recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions affecting substantive and due process rights of exceptional pupils. Alternative School is only one component in a large spectrum of services available to exceptional pupils in Alachua County.

Included in this booklet are the following:

a. introductory letter describing the school, given out to parents and supporting agency counselors.
b. diagram of the emotionally disturbed education system.
c. a list of policy questions frequently asked, many dealing with sensitive and controversial issues which are misunderstood by the media and the public.
d. rules for students at Alternative School.
e. an article about the historical background and program content, which also appears as a chapter in Rex E. Schmid, Readings in Special Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977).
f. annual report of the principal to the superintendent, school year 1974-1975.
g. annual report of the principal to the superintendent, school year 1975-1976.

For additional information on Alternative School, call Dr. Russell W. Ramsey, Principal, (area code 904) 377-5256.
For additional information on other exceptional student education programs in Alachua County, call the Director of Exceptional Student Education, (area code 904) 373-5192, extension 280.

Summary of Main Features, Alternative School

1. Component of: exceptional student education program, Alachua County Public Schools.

2. Staff: 20 personnel; all certified teachers hold the master's degree in emotionally disturbed education, all aides hold the bacholor's degree in education or the associate of arts in exceptional student education.

3. Funding ratio: 3.7 times the annual state fulltime equivalent pupil base; budget approximately $172,000 annually plus summer school and support services from the school district, the University of Florida, the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, Santa Fe Community College and the City of Gainesville.

4. Facility: one building with 7 learning suites, office, storage, timeout rooms, utility room, kitchen, mechanical training shop, conference room, and counseling offices, plus 2 acre municipal recreation park with football field, softball diamond, concrete basketball and tennis courts, volleyball courts, and playground equipment.

5. Legal basis: 1972 comprehensive Florida statute, mandating services for exceptional pupils in 15 categories, describing psychological evaluation and due process, establishing funding categories, and creating the legal definition of an emotionally disturbed pupil.

6. Location: 1108 N. W. 7th Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32601; in operation since July, 1974; replaced former Mountain Top Center for social adjustment, which went out of existence at that time.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

ALACHUA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1108 N. W. 7th Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601

Phone 904-377-5256
904-373-5192, Ext. 240

August 30, 1976

Dear Friends:

This letter is to provide basic information about the Alternative School, of the Alachua County Public Schools, which opened in the summer of 1974.

GOAL: The basic goal of the Alternative School Program is the return of the student to the mainstream of public-school life and/or successful adjustment in the home and community.

PUPILS: Students may be referred from grades 6-12 in any middle or secondary school in the Alachua County Public Schools. The student must meet eligibility criteria for placement in the Exceptional Student Educational Program for students who exhibit severe emotionally or socially maladjusted behavior, and who require structured educational experiences unavailable at the local school center. A team, consisting of a teacher and a teacher aide, is responsible for a maximum of 10 students in each of the six learning suites.

Pupils, accompanied by teachers, are taken by school bus to the Sidney Lanier Center where they participate in the regular school lunch program. Bus transportation for each pupil, residing over two miles from the school, is arranged, individually, with the Alachua County Public Schools' Transportation Department. Pupils, who have completed at least one full year at the Alternative School, may be eligible for consideration to return to the school center in their zone of residence.

STAFF: There is a principal, a secretary, a custodian; 7 certified teachers (two with double certification in both guidance counseling and rehabilitation counseling), all having a basic field with post-graduate emphasis in education for the emotionally disturbed; and six teacher aides, each with two-year college certification in educational programs and at least one vocational skill.

The program comes under the direct supervision of the Director of Exceptional Student Education, Alachua County Public Schools. There is a close staff liaison relationship with the Student Services Department (psychological, occupational, attendance, health, and counseling services) and with the curriculum staff. The school also has full support of all administrative

and logistical services of the Alachua County Public Schools, and a close liaison relationship with several city, county, and state agencies.

CURRICULUM: Education for emotionally disturbed students does not constitute a curriculum by itself, but consists of a set of teaching methods or strategies. Pupils participate on a daily basis in mathematics, science, social studies, reading and language development, physical education, and occupational skill training. Skills for which the school is equipped are: carpentry, horticulture, drafting, cooking and sewing, typing, and instrumental music. The school also operates the National Youth Program Utilizing Minibikes (NYPUM), a nationwide system of classes for teaching responsibility through team-training with motorbikes.

Each curriculum unit involves specific instructional objectives and behavioral outcomes based on individual student needs, with extensive written evaluation of the student's progress. A unit of instruction completed successfully at the Alternative School counts the same as a unit completed in any of the other school centers.

COUNSELING: Selected topics are explored in a group setting with an emphasis on social and interpersonal relationships. Individual guidance counseling is provided to pupils as needed. Several outside agencies provide counseling and/or mental health services. Parents are encouraged to participate in periodic conferences with the staff, and have formed an ongoing group with afternoon and evening meetings.

FACILITY: The school is housed in the former Lincoln High School (later the west wing of the A. Quinn Jones Elementary School). The two-story facility on the same campus is the A. Quinn Jones Adult Education Center, 716 N. W. 10th Street, phone 378-4735 or 373-5192, Ext. 306. The center has no administrative connection with the Alternative School (see above address and phone numbers). The Alternative School consists of an administrative suite and 7 learning suites.

There are substantial playground facilities and recreational equipment belonging to the City of Gainesville, but available to the school. There is also a teaching team at the Regional Detention Center at 3221 N.E. 39th Ave., which comes under the administrative control of the Alternative School. This team provides a contracted service to the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. Its function is educational, and neither the team nor the Alternative School itself has any direct connection with the management of juvenile services.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Several agencies serve in a direct functional role with the Alternative School staff. The school accepts University of Florida interns, primarily in such fields as special education, guidance counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and psychology. (Parents of Alternative School pupils meet regularly with the staff to increase their understanding of how to deal with an emotionally disturbed child in the home and community.)

An advisory council of community leaders, educators, and mental health specialists provides direction to the program. A number of businesses cooperate with the school by providing part-time jobs which behaviorally disordered youngsters can handle as they learn and grow into self-control.

For further information, please call the school or visit by appointment. The Alternative School represents a serious commitment to provide effective education for students with emotional problems.

Sincerely yours,

Russell W. Ramsey

Russell W. Ramsey, Ph. D.
Principal, Alternative School

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
1108 N. W. 7th Avenue
Alachua County Public Schools
Gainesville, Florida 32601

August 30, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDE FOR STAFF OPERATIONS

1. The official working day for this institution is 8:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M., plus such after hours duties as shall occasionally be required by the principal or by the needs of professional practices. The following details are specified:

a. All personnel are required to supervise the student lunch period by physical presence with assigned class, and to participate physically in body development activities for students.

b. No personnel may leave the campus between 8:00 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. without express consent of the principal, unless a bona fide emergency (medical or law enforcement) occurs when the principal is not on campus. In that event, a certified teacher may specify certain personnel to leave campus for purposes of resolving the emergency, and a report of this action will be rendered to the principal afterwards.

c. All personnel will have a 30 minute unencumbered period between 8:00 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. in which to rest, consume food and beverages, smoke, or visit. This break is to be taken where it cannot interfere with the instructional program.

d. All personnel will have about one hour of work time daily for planning, preparation of materials, and administrative chores. This time, plus the 30 minute break, leaves approximately six hours daily of required contact time with pupils in some capacity (teaching, counseling, games, testing, supervision, eating, trips, organized relaxation break, etc.).

e. Compensatory time for after duty hour tasks will be granted by arrangement with the principal.

2. The team leader, who is the certified teacher over each homeroom unit, is the directing person upon whom the program of this school is based. The teacher aide and interns work for the team leader, who is charged with responsibility for the emotional, social, and educational development of the assigned pupils, and for insuring that every minute of each pupil's time is a planned, supervised experience. The concept of breaks for students in the form of unsupervised, unplanned time, even for very short periods, is not permitted. The team leader's authority, within the parameters of state law, district policy, and this memorandum, is absolute.

3. Suspension, preferring of legal charges, and corporal punishment will be approved by the principal in each instance. Team leaders may, in the absence of the principal from the campus, suspend for the remainder of the present day only, and administer corporal punishment with a witness present. The daily behavior report form will carry a written annotation whenever suspension or corporal punishment is carried out.

4. Each team leader will develop a daily, weekly, and six weeks planned program for the assigned homeroom pupils. Written accountability for this program will be rendered by the team leader as follows:

Behavior Observation Report	Daily (filed)
Teacher's Attendance Book	Daily, 6 weekly (grades)
Instruction Schedule	Weekly (posted)
Grade Card	6 weekly (filed)
Individual Teaching Strategy	6 weekly (filed)
Pupil Progress Report	6 weekly (filed)
FTE Report	Each semester
Property Inventory	Each semester
Mileage Certificate (with home visit summary)	Monthly
Cumulative Folder	June
Home Visitation Log	Continuous

5. All staff members will be assigned one specialty area for curriculum development. This task does not mean that the individual necessarily conducts the instruction in that field, but rather connotes a responsibility to develop the teaching of that area throughout the staff.

6. All team leaders are required to make a minimum of four home visits yearly to the family of each assigned pupil. Mileage compensation and compensatory time are provided. On-duty home visitation is sometimes necessary, due to parental working hours, and will be authorized by the principal when needed.

7. All personnel are required to enforce all the laws and rules pertinent to students regardless of personal belief regarding said laws and rules. Personnel are required to offer immediate assistance to any other staff member who may be facing physical inability to control a pupil. Violent behavior of pupils will be restrained by staff members using minimum violence and giving due attention to the physical safety of all persons concerned. A written report on the daily behavior report will be rendered of all violent behaviors resulting in physical assault on another person, and in all instances where a weapon or injury-producing object was utilized. Legal charges will be filed when deemed appropriate by the ranking certified person who witnessed the event.

8. All personnel must report signs of child abuse, child neglect, and parental contribution to delinquency of any kind. This report will be make to the principal and shall be relayed to Children's Protective Services for investigation. Staff members will be expected to testify to the extent of their professional knowledge against abusive and neglectful parents when prosecution is decided upon.

9. Cumulative folders of the pupils are restricted information. Only certified teachers may post information in them. Only the principal may authorize their use by non-staff members. Under no circumstances may they be taken out of the office.

10. Staff members are expected to dress appropriately for the conduct of their work. Since physical activity and positive role modeling are important, neat looking slacks or jeans with shirt or blouse are suggested.

11. Each staff member is issued one key to the homeroom and must sign the key log. Other rooms will be opened by request as needed. Staff members will not allow any key to pass out of their hands; students are explicitly prohibited from possession of keys.

12. The Alternative School does not maintain an internal account. Team leaders have a set quantity of budgeted money to spend each year on expendable supplies and textbooks. Any project involving the students and money (e.g., each pupil bringing money for a project, or selling a project made by the student) must be reviewed and cleared in advance by the principal.

13. Team leaders may conduct field trips by arrangement with the principal. Pupils participating will have a permission slip signed by parent or guardian. No staff member can be required to drive their personal auto for school business, but team leaders may claim mileage compensation if they do use their own auto. If any pupils are left behind, the team leader must arrange for their supervision before hand. Adequate supervision must be provided on the trip to guarantee conduct which will not justifiably antagonize the public. If pupils who ride the bus fleet are taken on a trip, the team leader must insure that they return in time to make their bus connection or guarantee them an alternative ride home. The practice of using parents or other volunteers to drive on field trips will be cleared each time by the team leader with the principal.

14. All duty-incurred injuries will be reported on a workman's compensation claim, the same day that it occurs.

15. Team leaders will be replaced by a substitute on days when they are absent. Ten days paid sick leave are authorized, two of which are considered personal leave not related to illness. The principal will be notified as rapidly as possible when a team leader decides that he or she will not be reporting for duty. If the teacher has not reported for duty by 8:15 A.M., a substitute will be called. Every effort will be made to leave the plan book, grade book, and other materials in a state of readiness in the team leader's desk. There are no substitutes for teacher aides, but aides are authorized ten paid days of sick leave.

16. Each staff member is responsible for leaving the classrooms and shops in a neat, clean condition at the conclusion of each activity. Students will be required to participate in housekeeping chores as part of the curriculum.

17. Various kinds of interns and practicum students will be screened by the principal and assigned to the team leaders. They are expected both to learn and to give service; they are accountable to the team leader for their conduct on the job, and to their supervising professor for their professional development. A limit of two student teachers or counselors is the maximum which any one team leader will use at any one time. The team leader has total authority within state law, local policy, and this directive, to specify the activities of these student teachers or counselors. Each one will fill out a background sheet giving the parameters of the learning experience and the directing professor's name, at the time of approval by the principal. The team leader may, <u>for professional reasons</u>, require the student teacher or counselor to leave the premises. The principal, only, may <u>terminate placement</u> of the student teacher or counselor. No legal liability in any direction is accepted by the school in utilizing these student teachers and counselors.

18. Team leaders are required to maintain close liason with counselors from the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services who are assigned to their pupils. Communication will be weekly, as a minimum. The team leader is also expected to be well informed about legal, medical, and social agency personnel other than HRS who may be seeing their pupils on a non-recurring basis.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK
School Year 1976-77

1. Each day must include a period each of the following chosen from the Accreditator and suited to the child's needs and abilities: math, language or reading, social studies, science or health, physical education, vocational exploratory, and counseling or values clarification. The first six will be carried in the teacher gradebook and recorded on the pupil's grade card and cumulative folder, using a FSDE Accreditator title and number.

2. Physical education is performance mandated as follows:
   a. departmentalized for group sports (i.e. Units 1, 2 and 3 together; and Units 4 and 5 together)
   b. 2/3 emphasis on group-social development, 1/3 emphasis on body and motor-coordination development.

3. Vocational education is performance mandated as follows:
   a. each homeroom will perform an exploratory unit in carpentry, sewing, cooking, typing, horticulture and job readiness
   b. following schedule of vocational units will be followed to insure availability of materials and facilities:

	GRADING TERM					
	1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.	6th.
Readiness	All					
Carpentry		1	5	4	3	2
Sewing		2	1	5	4	3
Cooking		3	2	1	5	4
Typing		4	3	2	1	5
Horticulture		5	4	3	2	1

4. The daily framework is mandated as follows:

9:00 - 11:25 A.M.....homeroom teacher's choice

11:25 - 12:15 P.M.....lunch

12:15 - 1:25 P.M.....vocational exploratory

1:25 - 2:20 P.M.....physical education, all pupils

2:20 - 2:45 P.M.....homeroom teacher's choice

5. Units may departmentalize for instruction (i.e., Units 1, 2, and 3, middle school; Units 4, 5, and 6, high school).

6. Each team leader will assume on-site supervisory responsibility for the NYPUM program during one six-week grading period. Mr. Ulysses Woods is permanent coordinator of NYPUM activities. Team leaders are assigned as follows:

Team #1 - None (pupils are selected by performance criteria)
Term #2 - Ms. Roberta Smith
Term #3 - Ms. Lynda Knittel
Term #4 - Mr. Joe Waldorf
Term #5 - Mr. Jon Dyson
Term #6 - Mr. Johnny Moore

This obligation is twice weekly for two hours, during the term indicated.

7. For departmentalized activities, Mr. Joe Waldorf is designated as coordinator for middle school (Units #1, 2, and 3); and Mr. Johnny Moore coordinator for secondary school (Units 4, 5, and 6). While team leaders are free to departmentalize as much or as little as they may wish, an obligation once made to the other team leaders at that level will be kept.

STAFF DUTY ASSIGNMENTS

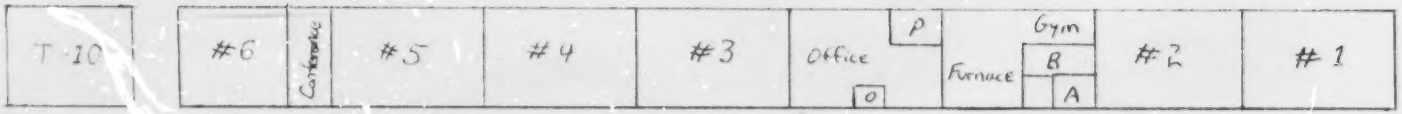
School Year 1976-77

NAME		CURRICULUM AREA	SPECIAL DUTIES
Ms. Roberta Smith	Unit 1	female development	liason with Shands Hospital
Mr. Greg Mead	Unit 6	motor coordination skills	
Ms. Lynda Knittel	Unit 2	art	liason with Child, Youth & Family Center
Mr. Harry LaCava	Unit 2	reading, math skills	
Mr. Ray Riley	Unit 1	physical education	
Ms. Martha Johnson	Unit 3	sewing	
Mr. Jon Dyson	Unit 4	science	liason with HRS Intake
Mr. Joe Mattox	Unit 4	mathematics	
Mr. Johnny Moore	Unit 5	social studies	liason with HRS Probation
Ms. Sara Branton	Unit 5	female development	
Mr. Lee Sherry	Unit 7	work readiness	liason with labor market
Mr. Harold Hausauer	Unit 7	carpentry	
Mr. Perman Roberts	RDC	all subjects	liason with HRS Detention
Mr. Linell Singleton	RDC	recreation	
Mrs. Dorothy Emo	Admin	typing	
Mr. Ulysses Woods	Admin	group sports	NYPUM
Mr. Don Conn	Unit 6	music	
Ms. Eleanor Todd	Unit 3	recreation	

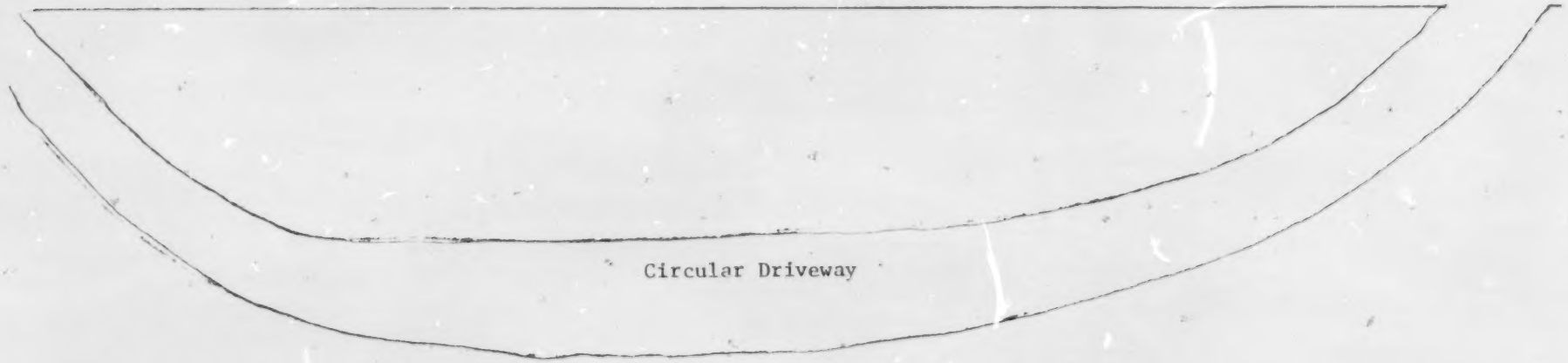
RESPONSIBLE PERSON

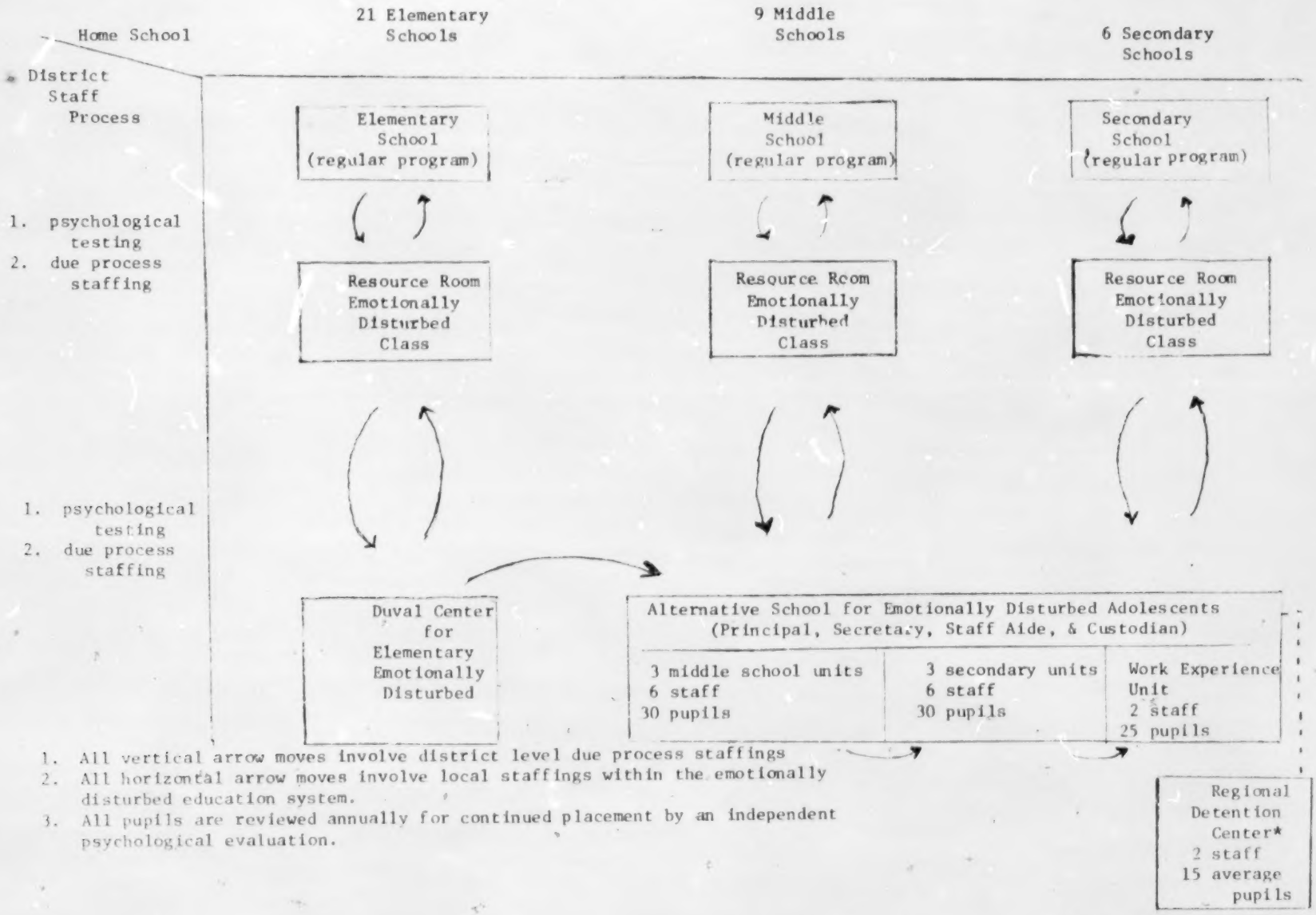
#1 - Ms. Smith
#2 - Ms. Knittel
#3 - Ms. Todd
#4 - Mr. Dyson
#5 - Mr. Moore
#6 - Mr. Conn
Furnace - Mr. Milligan
Room T-10 - Mr. Sherry

All other rooms require clearance with the principal prior to use.



N. W. 7th Avenue





1. All vertical arrow moves involve district level due process staffings
2. All horizontal arrow moves involve local staffings within the emotionally disturbed education system.
3. All pupils are reviewed annually for continued placement by an independent psychological evaluation.

*this facility run by State Dept. of HRS for 10 county district

SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY
Gainesville, Florida

QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Q. What students are eligible for assignment?

A. Pupils residing in Alachua County who meet eligibility requirements as provided in the Alachua County Procedures for Providing Special Education.

Q. What are the eligibility requirements?

A. The pupil must demonstrate a substantial pattern of emotional disturbance, in a variety of social environments, over a period of time. The abnormal behaviors must be documented, and a certified psychologist must perform an evaluation, the results of which confirm that the pupil is emotionally impaired. Then, a staffing conference must be held, which the pupil's parents or guardians have the right to attend. The school which refers the child for possible assignment to the Alternative School must show that two educational alternatives (e.g., complete change of schedule, different teachers, extended guidance intervention, etc.) have already been tried unsuccessfully.

Q. Can a student who commits a crime on a school campus be sent to the Alternative School as a consequence of the criminal act?

A. No. Education for the Emotionally Disturbed is one of the state approved exceptionalities under the Exceptional Student Education Program of the Alachua County Public Schools. There is no such thing as an educational placement which is done as punishment for committing a crime on a school campus. Criminal behavior by pupils is a matter for the school administration and the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over that school.

Q. Can a parent refuse to have their child assigned to the Alternative School?

A. No. However, the parent has a right to full information about the testing and staffing process by which the child is considered for such assignment. Parents are informed of any change in their child's educational placement or program and their right to review a placement decision is assured. The parents could withdraw the child from the Alachua County Public Schools, but they would then be obligated to send the child, under the Compulsory Attendance Law,

to a private school through the age of 15. Private schools do not have programs designed for emotionally disturbed students, and those few which have a program even partially approximating the resources of the Alternative School generally charge about $10,000 per year tuition.

Q. Can a principal, dean, or teacher have a child sent to the Alternative School on his or her own authority?

A. No. Only the Director of Exceptional Student Education has that authority, and then only when all eligibility requirements and procedural safeguards have been met.

Q. What is the relationship between the Alternative School and the Juvenile Court System?

A. The Alternative School is totally a component of the Alachua County Public Schools, performing for emotionally disturbed pupils the same service that the Sidney Lanier Center provides for the trainable mentally retarded pupils (TMR). A few pupils who come to the Alternative School already have counselors from the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services as a result of prior contact with the legal system. A somewhat larger number of Alternative School pupils are referred to some agency of the H.R.S. by the Alternative School's staff. Most of these referrals are for mental health services. Some are for dependency, neglect, or child abuse, and a few (less than 25% of the school's pupil population) are related to delinquency matters.

Q. Are there mentally retarded pupils at the Alternative School?

A. No. A few may test in the upper range of the educable mentally retarded (EMR) intelligence quotient scores, because some emotionally disturbed pupils have missed out on so much learning and learning skill development. Furthermore, many emotionally disturbed pupils have difficulty in concentrating on tests and hence make lower scores than their abilities warrant. But a presumption underlying pupil eligibility for the educational category for the emotionally disturbed is that the pupil possesses normal intellect. Retests of pupils who have been at the Alternative School for a full year or two show clearly that, when emotional disturbance has been reduced through therapy and special instruction, intel-

ligence quotients, apparently in the upper retarded range, climb into the normal zone. Educable mentally retarded (EMR) pupils attend Exceptional Student Education Programs in their regularly assigned school centers. Trainable mentally retarded students (TMR) are assigned to the Sidney Lanier Center on a full time basis.

Q. What is the social composition of Alternative School pupils?

A. The pupils are evenly scattered in grades 6 through 10, with a few 11th-and 12th-graders. About two-thirds are boys, one-third girls. About one-fourth of the pupils come from professional-managerial families. One-half come from blue-collar or white-collar wage-earning families, and the remaining one-fourth come from income-assisted families. About sixty percent of the pupils are Caucasian, forty percent are Negro. About two-thirds of the pupils come from the greater Gainesville urban area, and one-third from the outlying eight towns, and the farming section of Alachua County. About one-third are hyperactive and/or aggressive, and another one-third are passive, withdrawn adolescents. The remaining one-third cannot be classified by social behavior. Most are doing academic work about two years below grade level. A solid eighty percent come from broken homes, frequently with traumatized backgrounds.

Q. Is there such a thing as a school which has no emotionally disturbed pupils (and which therefore needs no process for identification and special handling of emotionally impaired students)?

A. No. National prevalency figures suggest that about 1.5% of any population unit requires special services for the emotionally disturbed student. Full-time placed emotionally disturbed pupils in Alachua County number less than one hundred out of 23,000. About three times that number attend resource rooms for special help with emotional problems, but these rooms are right in the regularly zoned school center. The notion that affluent neighborhoods do not produce children with needs for special training in coping with emotional problems stems from a confusion of emotional disturbances with social characteristics often imparted to children from overcrowded, underprivileged circumstances.

Q. What do the pupils do at the Alternative School?

A. Education for emotionally disturbed students is a set of methods, not a curriculum. Philosophically, it deals with the inner feelings of a

pupil as well as with the social environment of the school and the home. Each day at the Alternative School, the student engages in four academic subjects (chosen from the Florida State Department of Education Accreditator), one vocational subject, physical education, and individual or group counseling. Every social move is planned, with a precise set of consequences. Lunch is eaten with the staff in homeroom groups. Precision teaching methods are used whenever possible. Frequent and highly detailed, written records are made of all areas of academic, social, psychological, and physical progress.

Q. How many pupils are in a class?

A. 10 maximum. A certified teacher with a master's degree in education for the emotionally disturbed, an aide with a junior college certificate in special education aide service, and one to three interns or practicum students in education, nursing, or psychology, work all day with a maximum load of ten students. The teacher is also engaged in frequent home visits and family counseling. The Alternative School also receives back-up services from several staff agencies of the school district, and a large component of service time from the professional personnel of the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

Q. How long do pupils stay at the Alternative School?

A. An average of two school years. When a pupil can work near grade level, operate several days at a time without special supervision, and is receiving stable homelife support, a staffing is held. The Director of Exceptional Student Education reassigns the pupil back to a regular school center, at a grade level, and in a program most appropriate to the pupil's needs. Just as most emotionally disturbed pupils enter the Alternative School through first having attended a resource room type of Special Education Program so, too, do most pupils return to the resource room for a year or so when they re-enter the regular school center. This resource room program helps the student in mainstreaming himself or herself into the fully normalized school program.

Q. How is the Alternative School different from the former Mountain Top School?

A. The Mountain Top School was an ad hoc arrangement, established by the Alachua County School Board in early 1970 to assist racially

hostile pupils in making the transition into integrated building assignments. Deans and principals referred the pupils on a crisis basis; usually for fighting, vandalism, threatening, and serious authority refusals. The staff had no Special Education certification. Pupils stayed for only one month, and then returned to their regular school. The Alternative School, by contrast, keeps pupils on a long-term basis for a highly structured, planned program. The teachers have one of the highest academic certification levels of any component among the teacher corps. The philosophy of the school is based on nationally recognized principles for teaching emotionally disturbed children. Assignment for a single illegal act, unlike the Mountain Top School Program, is explicitly prohibited. Finally, Alternative School pupils mirror the county's composition in social and economic terms, while Mountain Top pupils came predominantly from the low-income sector.

Q. How is the Alternative School funded, and does it compete for funds with regular school centers?

A. The Alternative School receives a factor of 3.7 times the per pupil Full-Time Equivalent Funding Base (FTE). This money is awarded to Alachua County by the Florida Education Finance Program, the same as for all other public educational programs. There is no way that the money could be applied to some other purpose if the Alternative School did not exist.

Q. Do Alternative School pupils get the use of the school district's bus fleet and lunchroom programs?

A. Yes, in both cases. The school staff prefers that educational personnel from other schools not attempt to explain administrative details of eating and transportation to the parents of prospective pupils. While parental concern is understandable, the program is highly individualized for each pupil, and the staff sets up eating, bus transportation, and many other matters as part of a complex and comprehensive network of services.

Q. Does the Alternative School use punishment and restraint of its pupils?

A. The Alternative School employs a wide-range of behavioral consequences, both positive and negative, by which to change behavior. The staff also has occasion, from time to time, to restrain a pupil whose behavior is simply out of control, and therefore dangerous to

himself or others. The state statutes pertinent to these subjects are followed to the letter, as well as the latest court decisions on due process, recording of events, witnessing, and parental notification.

Q. Is the Alternative School somehow connected with the Regional Detention Center?

A. The State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services now operates a multicounty juvenile detention center in a building that was formerly known as the Alachua County Juvenile Center. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the now defunct Mountain Top School was co-located on the same property. The Regional Detention Center is a temporary detention facility for juveniles under consideration for adjudication from the 8th and 3rd Judicial Circuits of Florida. It has a teaching staff of two personnel who are under the administrative supervision of the principal of the Alternative School. The program is administered under an interlocal agreement. Pupils in the center come under the Social Adjustment Category of the Florida Exceptional Student Education Law, and their program is in no way related to the program at the Alternative School.

Q. Is it true that Alternative School pupils get to ride motorbikes as part of their curriculum?

A. The National Youth Program Utilizing Minibikes (NYPUM) has a unit at the Alternative School. NYPUM consists of motorized bikes donated by the Honda Corporation of America. The Alternative School NYPUM Unit has sixteen minibikes which are used twice-weekly, for two hours per session, under staff supervision. Pupils have to compete for the right to participate, and they have to learn maintenance and follow operational procedures when they participate in the program. The program is therefore motivational and highly effective in awakening a sense of pride in performance.

Q. Are visitors allowed to visit the Alternative School?

A. Professional persons from educational and mental health areas are always welcome by appointment. Parents of pupils are encouraged to visit the school frequently. Presentations about the Alternative School are available for civic groups, classes, or clubs, upon request to the principal.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
Alachua County Public Schools
1108 N. W. 7th Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601

RULES FOR STUDENTS
School Year 1976-77

1. You have been assigned to Alternative School in order to get help with your special needs. You were placed here because a psychologist acting under state law said that you needed special help as a result of your emotional disturbance. You were not sent here as a result of any particular offense which you may have committed on your regular school campus. You will be at Alternative School this year, and maybe for another year, until we feel that you can succeed in a regular school. We want you to succeed in school and in life; that is why you were assigned here. Our school is part of the Alahcua County Public Schools. It is not part of the juvenile system. Some of our pupils have counselors from one of the state agencies.

2. You will be in a very small class with a teacher and a teacher aide. We also have student teachers, and counselors from other agencies. We require that you follow the instructions of your teachers at all times. They have the legal authority to tell you what to do, and they are backed by the law to make sure you do what you are told.

3. You will get a full schedule of accredited academic subjects at Alternative School. If you learn to deal well with your emotional problems, you may be returned to your regular school or another program at the end of this school year. The Superintendent has the authority to make this decision.

4. Children in Florida who are between the ages of 6 and 16 must attend school by state law. If you skip school and are under 16, we will have you picked up and will probably refer you to the juvenile system. If you are 16 or older and skip school, you will be dropped for non-attendance, and will not be allowed to graduate from another public school. There is no way to skip school without a serious penalty; we care enough about having you come to school that we set up a system to be that way. To stay home with illness, your parent or guardian must certify that you were sick and we will check on this.

5. We will work hard with you on several areas. We want you to be a good reader, to handle numbers well, to understand our society, to have excellent job skills; to be a good athlete, and to enjoy creating. If you will stress these positive things, the negative rules aren't really needed.

6. Each day we will have some kind of counseling group. The more you put yourself into it, the more you will get out of it. But, remember that every student has problems to discuss, and you must show respect for other students' problems if you wish people to respect your own.

7. We treat all pupils as equal. Students who provoke trouble with other students about race, religion, looks, family background, or personal things can expect to be punished for this act.

8. You will be promoted to the next higher grade in June if your teacher and principal both recommend it. You must do the work to get promoted.

9. You should wear clothes in which you can work and play. We don't have a locker room. If girls wear dresses, please bring some shorts or slacks for physical education.

Rules for students

10. Your homeroom teacher will visit in your home from time to time. He, or she, will discuss your work both in and out of school with your parents. He will make some plans with you and your parents to be sure that you are doing the things that a person your age ought to be doing.

11. You will be on full pay, or assisted, or free lunch, the same as at all other schools. We eat, staff and students together, by homeroom, over at Sidney Lanier Center. We all ride the bus over there. Good manners are expected. If you misbehave, your teacher may take part or all of your lunch away from you.

12. You are to arrive on your assigned bus, or else not more than 10 minutes before 8:45 A.M., if you don't ride the bus. When you arrive, you are to be on the playground until school starts at 8:45 A.M.. When school turns out at 2:45 P.M., you are to board your bus, or else leave campus immediately. If your teacher tells you to remain after school, you must remain until your teacher releases you.

13. Most of our pupils ride the Alachua County Public School's bus fleet. Some have special rides on two or three different buses. We expect you to behave well on your bus and obey the driver. If you do not, you will be suspended from riding the bus and forced to get to school by yourself. Your family is required to see that you attend, and we will use the law to make sure that you do, even if you are suspended from bus riding for misbehavior.

14. No smoking is permitted by students. Your teacher may take cigarettes away from you if he or she thinks it is necessary. Any student who is under the influence of liquor or drugs can expect to be taken to the juvenile authorities.

15. You may not bring any kind of weapon to school. If you do, it will be taken away from you and you will be charged under the law.

16. We will not permit any hitting of other people. If you do this, you will almost certainly be charged with assault and placed in the juvenile system. Remember that the teachers have the power to require you to do what they say, and that if you try to hit them you are committing a serious crime.

17. Students who steal or break property of the school or other people can expect to be prosecuted.

18. We ask you not to bring more than one dollar to school. If you do, your teachers have the right to hold your money until school is over.

19. Our campus is closed. Pupils may not leave except on an approved trip with the teacher, or when excused or suspended by the principal.

20. You may not bring friends to school with you. Your parents or guardians are welcome at any time.

Russell W Ramsey

Russell W. Ramsey, Ph.D.
Principal

EDUCATING TROUBLED YOUTH

AMID

WHIRLWIND SOCIAL CHANGE

Russell W. Ramsey, Ph.D.
Principal, Alternative School
Alachua County (Florida) Public Schools

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Council for Exceptional Children
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April 23, 1975

Educating Troubled Youth Amid Whirlwind Social Change

Russell W. Ramsey

April 1975

The Alachua County, Florida Public School system operates a center called the Alternative School for some fifty emotionally troubled teen-agers. It serves a school district which enrolls nearly 23,000 pupils, and throughout the thirty-four school centers of the district there are special classes for emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted pupils whose problems are not severe enough to warrant assignment to a special center. The present configuration of Alternative School represents the fifth year of a continuous effort to develop educational services for troubled youth.

Twenty years ago, Gainesville, Florida, the county seat of Alachua County, was a small farming and mercantile center, a governmental administrative town, and also home of the University of Florida. Located in dead center of a predominantly agricultural zone of north central Florida, it was surrounded by eight small communities rather symmetrically spaced around the periphery of the county. Of the Alachua County population (estimated in 1955 at 65,000), nearly two-thirds were concentrated in Gainesville. Nearly one-half of the labor force were engaged in education and government service.

The Negro minority of the population, around twenty-five per cent, attended strictly segregated schools which were long on pride, client support, and tradition, but not funded at the same proportionate rate as the schools for Caucasions. While Gainesville was the location of a Sunland Training Center, part of the Florida state system of institutions for the severely mentally retarded, there was only a modest program of special classes for the educable-mentally retarded children of both races in the Alachua County Public Schools.

In 1957, a major medical training center was added to the University of Florida, and the student and faculty population of the entire university boomed continuously during the 1960's. As the population increased, several major patterns of social change took place at a rapid pace. Perhaps the most powerful changes were three: unitary racial integration of the public schools, the youth revolt and its powerful effects upon most college towns, and the passing of the traditional southern ethos as the dominant social force. When the smoke had cleared, Gainesville, in 1975, was a national model city of 78,000 people in many important aspects of life and governance. Alachua County, with approximately 120,000 permanent residents, showed many parallel developments in model governance and public education.

But rapid social change and population growth carry a negative price, too, one which shows up quickly in the lives of disturbed and delinquent youth. While every society seems to produce a certain irreducible number of persons who cannot cope with life, the absence of solid family and community foundations in a new or recently altered society almost certainly increases the potential recruitment base for juvenile delinquency. And if the potential population for juvenile delinquency is not definitely higher, at least the opportunities for emotionally disturbed youths to act out their problems in delinquent forms are certainly increased. When the public school institutions are themselves one of the main focal points of rapid social change, there will certainly be an increased incidence of violence, vandalism, and disruption by disturbed adolescents.

The Alachua County Public Schools first began to feel concern for the presence of disruptive teen-agers in the late 1960's, when a number of high school youngsters attempted to emulate the antics of the college dropout set by doing things which blurred the previously established disciplinary limits commonly known to school administrators. There was much debate over which children were emotionally disturbed or merely delinquent, and which ones were

acting purposefully to expand the legal rights of youth. Alachua County accomodated the second category by relaxing dress codes, haircut rules, and many First Amendment restrictions long before most public school systems in the nation made these changes.

In February, 1970, the Federal District Court ordered an immediate unitary racial integration plan which, at teen-age level, was implemented in Alachua County by closing the all Negro Lincoln High School and busing most of its pupils to Gainesville High School. While the latter school had enrolled a few black pupils since 1964 on a court ordered freedom-of-choice integration plan, it was temporarily unable to cope with the overnight mixing of large numbers of pupils from different cultural and educational traditions. Exacerbating the problem were double-session pupil assignment and overcrowding, the result of rapid population growth. The School Board had labored mightily to get a new construction bond issue passed in 1968 to cope with the obvious (citizens defeated a 1966 proposed new construction bond issue).

The instantaneous integration order of 1970 put three overwhelming problems simultaneously into the hallways of Gainesville High School in the spring of 1970: severe over-crowding, instantaneous racial integration at a mass level, and a requirement to honor the several court decisions which radically expanded student freedoms. Any one of these things was enough to cause severe disorders in most urban high schools. At Gainesville High School in 1970, the results were one small race riot, a series of gang fights over the next two years, periodic beating of students by gangs, and a severe disruption of the learning process which bore little resemblance to the dreams of many persons in higher education who had hoped to liberate the American high school from its penchant for petty rules. While much of the initial fighting and vandalism were done by teen-agers who were not normally considered to be problem pupils, it became obvious within a few weeks that the residual gangsterism in the middle

schools and secondary schools was being done by the chronically disturbed and delinquent youngsters.

During the summer of 1970, the School Board voted to operate a special center for disruptive students. The center was called the Mountain Top School, from the famous speech by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and symbolizing the view into the promised land. The facility consisted of a one-room portable wooden classroom situated in a grove of pine trees adjacent to the Alachua County Juvenile Shelter. The staff consisted of one teacher-director,[1] and part-time services from a reading specialist and several different student teachers from various graduate programs at the University of Florida.

Students came to the Mountain Top School on a temporary administrative assignment from their regular schools, usually following an act of violence or extreme belligerance against other pupils or teachers. The average pupil stayed for one month and returned to the regularly assigned school center. All six high schools and all nine middle schools in the county were eligible to send pupils, the main criterion being that the student had committed an act or acts of such gravity that expulsion or legal prosecution or both would have been utilized if the Mountain Top School had not existed. While the major assumption was that the typical student would be a physically tough boy with a low boiling point in racial confrontations, there was also an agreement with the County Juvenile Judge to allow those children who were inmates of the Juvenile Shelter to attend on days when their behavior would permit it.

During the first year, some 109 children attended the Mountain Top School. Most came on administrative referral from the regularly assigned school center, although a significant minority were Juvenile Shelter inmates. A few pupils attended the school in both categories. Slightly over one-half of the pupils were black;

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[1] The author was founder and director of the Mountain Top School during school years 1970-71 and 1971-72. See: Russell W. Ramsey, "Social Adjustment Education in the Alachua County Public Schools", Florida Pupil Personnel Quarterly (Summer 1971) and Steve Collings, Mountain Top (Gainesville, 1972).

a solid two-thirds were boys; and the majority were from grades eight, nine and ten.

The curriculum consisted of mathematics, English or language, social studies (with heavy emphasis on local history and sociology), physical education, group counseling, health or basic science, and some sort of humanities (usually music appreciation of rock and soul pieces with a social message). There were two or three field trips each week, with emphasis on vocational possibilities, community linkage, and inter-personal behavior. While the mood and style were casual, easy, and exploratory, there was a firm and quickly enforced policy against violence in any form, as well as the conscious teaching of Dr. M.L. King's doctrine of non-violent social change.

During its second year, the Mountain Top School grew into two portable classrooms with adjoining storage room. A second teacher and two teacher aides were added. During the second year, the school served nearly 250 pupils, with about the same social profile as the first year. During both of its first two years, about 80% of the pupils who attended Mountain Top School returned to their original schools and completed the school year without further serious delinquent acts.

At this point, it is relevant to sketch in some changes which occurred during 1970-72. The people of Alachua County made it apparent that they would support racial integration, with a huge bus fleet carrying 10,000 of the 23,000 pupils daily (and nearly one-half of these for the purpose of balancing the school centers racially). After some initial uproar on the local political scene, adults of both colors began sending their children to school with the idea that racial taunting and gangster behavior would not be tolerated. Special workshops for faculty and pupils helped put some positive dimensions into the acceptance of integration as a worthy thing in its own right.

Consequently, the target audience of potential pupils for the Mountain

Top School shifted increasingly during those first two years, from youngsters engaged in racially motivated acts of violence and vandalism to the broader, less easily defined area of disturbed and delinquent youth. The special education program in the county remained heavily concentrated in special classes for the educable-mentally retarded, with small additions in programsfor the trainable-mentally retarded, the speech and hearing handicapped, and the gifted. There remained a philosophical and economic hurdle against using the special education umbrella for the instruction of disturbed and delinquent youth. Florida education law, until 1973, inexplicably defined "emotional disturbance" as an elementary school exceptionality. Presumably, upon promotion to the 7th grade, the pupil changed from "emotionally disturbed" to "socially maladjusted", a term which meant, for practical purposes, that the pupil with a behaviorial disorder was to be treated administratively through the disciplinary regulations.

The state-local funding formula was virtually unworkable for both the emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted categories, since the classes must be small for control purposes but the pupils earned dollar credits at the same rate as normal pupils. Then, too, teacher certification in the form of a specialized degree program was in its infancy for emotionally disturbed education, and non-existent for teachers of socially maladjusted pupils.

A substantial federal grant enabled the Alachua County Public Schools to place social adjustment teams, each consisting of one teacher and one teacher aide, in eight high schools and middle schools. Because of barriers already described, the program was jointly supervised by the director of the Mountain Top School and the principal of the school in which the team was based rather than by the Exceptional Child Education Department. For the two years of its existence, the grant provided useful help for children with minor behavioral problems. But because the program never had the blessing of teacher or curriculum certification by the State Department of Exceptional Child Education, the social adjustment teams

were always the administrative step-children of the deans' offices instead of integral components of the school center in which they were based.

During the summer of 1972, the Alachua County Public Schools changed from the elected to the appointed superintendent system. As the new superintendent took over, he was given a strong mandate to expand the weakest component of the system - vocational education - and to add more types of exceptionalities to the special education system. A major vocational center was instituted, and many vocational and career awareness programs were added in all the school centers. Initially, there was some attempt to dump off the disturbed and the delinquent students in the new vocational center,[2] but steady progress was made towards the practice of placing students in the program best suited to their needs, for a valid set of reasons. The Mountain Top School, in school year 1972-73, shifted its emphasis somewhat towards peer group counseling and longer periods of pupil assignment. When the state of Florida took over the management of juvenile delinquency facilities and services in 1972, the Mountain Top School was dealt a sharp setback by losing the direct administrative articulation which it had previously enjoyed with the former Alachua County Juvenile Services Department. Although the State Division of Youth Services brought impressive new resources and methods to bear upon the state-wide juvenile delinquency picture, there was actually a two-year loss of coordinated work between educators and juvenile counselors as the new philosophy and personnel took hold.

By the spring of 1974, nearly all school personnel, juvenile counselors, and law enforcement officers who deal with youth were in agreement on one point about the Mountain Top School: it was a badly needed, but woefully insufficient, institution. Established for short-term problems of a specific nature, it was being asked to deliver long-term solutions. There were some who berated the little

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[2] The author was founder and principal of the vocational center for the two years of its existence, school years 1972-73 and 1973-74. In the summer of 1974, a major vocational plant was opened at the Santa Fe Community College, making it more economical and educationally feasible for the School Board to combine its advanced vocational students with the Community College vocational students. See: Russell W. Ramsey, "A Community School-Without Special Funding" Community Education Journal, (Jan.-Feb.-1974).

school because it had failed to be all things to all people, or, incredibly, on the grounds that it had abused the rights of children, overlooking the fact that other school systems throughout the nation were prosecuting and expelling most pupils of comparable behavior.[3]

During the integration crisis of 1970, the School Board of Alachua County had made a courageous, humanitarian decision not to expel youths who committed serious acts of vandalism and violence during the early period of unitary racial integration. In mid 1974, with sagging tax revenues staring them in the face, the Board confirmed its earlier decision with a still larger commitment. In the fall of 1974, there would be a network of classes for emotionally disturbed pupils throughout the thirty-four school centers. For teen-agers who had long records of seriously disturbed behavior, and who had already been tried in other programs, there would be an Alternative School, staffed and funded to provide highly intensive long-term services on a low pupil-teacher ratio. While the emotionally disturbed education classes were required to earn their own revenues under the new high ratio provided by the Full-Time Equivalent Pupil category, the Alternative School would get full funding for each class plus an artificial injection of general revenues from other sources.

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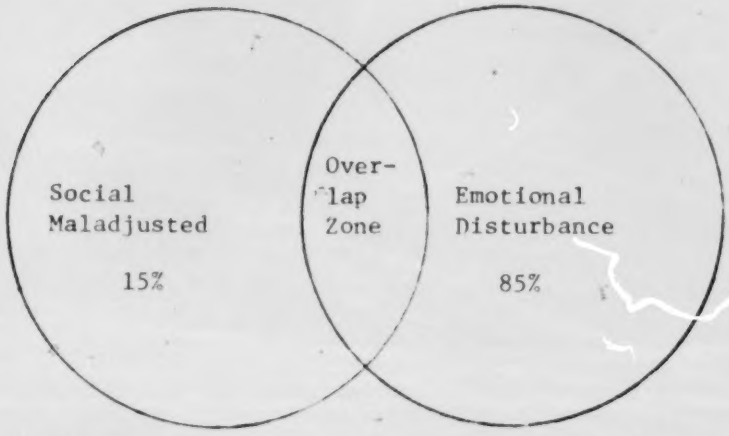
The point here is that some critics felt that if the Mountain Top School had not existed, the pupils could not have been identified and sent to a special adjustment center. These critics were generally the ones who will not acknowledge that there are teen-agers who injure others and deprive others of their education. Had there been no Mountain Top School in Alachua County from 1970-74, at least fifty students would have had to be expelled, at least that many prosecuted (assult, vandalism, robbery), and perhaps two hundred more would have dropped out. See: School Board of Alachua County, Mountain Top School Annual Report (1970-71, 1971-72,1972-73 and 1973-74).

Alternative School Population



1 defined socially and legally
2 skewed towards low income sector (hence racially loaded)
3 skewed towards physical acting out and coarse social habits
4 easily identified
5 responds to short term methods
6 draws undue attention

1 defined psychologically
2 spread across the economic spectrum
3 includes all points between hyper-aggressiveness and extremely withdrawn behavior
4 difficult to identify
5 frequently tied to long term corrective process
6 often escapes attention

Use of the Emotionally Disturbed category would provide more appropriate selection of pupils, although the Socially Maladjusted category would still be available to use when appropriate. The school would be located in a former elementary building with seven large classrooms, each with internal sink and toilets, and a large, well equipped playground. Best of all, the admissions procedure would be carefully designed and protected so that only those pupils from the six high schools and nine middle schools who demonstrated an extreme, well documented need for the services would be placed in the school.

Starting in September, 1974, the Alternative School pupils were selected and filtered in slowly over a three month period. By this means, the staff was able to develop a curriculum and liason procedures with community service agencies as the pupil population developed. As the first year drew to a close, the Alternative School program appeared to have effected some dramatic and permanent changes in most of its fifty pupils. Particularly significant is the fact that ten of these pupils had previously been patients in various

residential schools for the emotionally disturbed and were considered ineducable in a day school setting, while several more had successfully defeated all efforts in previous years by the Mountain Top School and the social adjustment program.

The staff for Alternative School was assembled in time to take advantage of the new Emotionally Disturbed Teacher Education Program, which had been recently added to the Special Education Department of the University of Florida's College of Education. Six teachers were selected from fifty applicants: five had completed or were enrolled in the Master of Education Program in Emotionally Disturbed Education; the sixth was double certified in Guidance Counseling and Rehabilitation Counseling at the Master's and Specialist level. All have prior experience in a school for problem students, and two had worked in hospital and residential institution settings. All were young and physically vigorous, but also experienced and well educated for their specialized roles. The principal,[4] secretary, and custodian were all chosen for prior successful experience in dealing with disturbed teen-agers. Six teacher aides were selected who possessed highly desirable critera: junior college certification as special education teacher aides, one or more vocational skills, and successful experience in some other program for troubled youth. All things considered, it represented the best aggregation of teaching and counseling skills for dealing with troubled youth which the Alachua County Public Schools had yet assembled.

During the summer of 1974, explicit written procedures for the determination of assignment elegibility were developed and placed in force. An elementary pupil who exhibited symptoms of emotional disorder is first evaluated by the guidance counselor of the home school center. If counseling and parental involvement do not produce improvement, the principal requests that a psychological battery test be administered by a school psychologist. If both the test

[4] The author was made principal of Alternative School in June, 1974, which made it possible to have administrative continuity in hiring the staff, equipping the facility, and designing the program before school opened in September.

results and the pupil's observed behavior, formally documented over a period of time, suggest that the child cannot succeed in a regular class, the principal can request a formal eligibility conference to consider assigning the pupil to an emotionally disturbed education class. At the conference, a staff representative of the Exceptional Child Education Department and school psychologist from the Pupil Personnel Services Department join the guidance counselor and administrator from the school center. The child's parents are invited, and also the assigned counselor from any legal or service agency which may have an interest in the case. One or more of the child's classroom teachers are also involved in the conference.

If there is substantial agreement that the child should be in an emotionally disturbed class, the principal will formally request an eligibility certificate from the Director of Exceptional Child Education. The eligibility procedures for the middle schools and high schools are essentially the same, except that more classroom teachers and agency counselors are usually involved in the staffing conferences. Each school center makes its own decision about the type of emotionally disturbed class it needs to operate. Generally, where there is a concentration of pupils who need a high degree of structure, the program is operated as a self-contained unit of about seven to ten pupils. Where there is a larger number of pupils who possess greater self control, the class operates as a resource room, with pupils attending one to three periods a day, but mainstreaming as many subjects as they can handle with a regular class. Adjacent school centers can transfer pupils who fit the configuration of another school's emotionally disturbed class better than the program in their regularly assigned building. And temporary transfers are permitted to prevent overloading of an emotionally disturbed unit, or until enough pupils have been declared eligible to hire an additional teacher for another emotionally disturbed unit in the pupil's original school center.

If the pupil is in grades six through twelve, and behavior is of such an extreme nature that either the child cannot learn or is too difficult to manage

in a special class, the principal can request a staffing conference for consideration to place the child in Alternative School. Essentially the same personnel and procedures are involved again with two important exceptions: the home school center must demonstrate that the pupil has failed to progress, or is too difficult to manage over a period of time, even in the special internal configuration; and the principal or a teacher from Alternative School attends to insure that the pupil really exhibits behavioral disorders of a character as severe as others already assigned.

The Staff Director of Exceptional Child Education reviews the documentation presented at the staffing conference. If all is in order and there was agreement by the major parties that the child can only succeed at Alternative School, the eligibility certificate is signed and the parents are sent a formal re-assignment notification letter. Under Florida law, the Staff Director of Exceptional Child Education is the legal assignment officer in this function, for both the superintendent of the local school district and the State Director of Exceptional Child Education. While the parents could withdraw their child from the public schools, they would still have to enroll a pupil younger than sixteen in an accredited private school because of the compulsory attendance laws.. If the child is sixteen or older and will not attend the Alternative School program, he is simply dropped from the rolls for non-attendance. While some alternative schools permit casual, voluntary attendance on a when-the-spirit-moves-you basis, the Alternative School of Alachua County is legally and philosophically geared to the notion that serious help and education for the emotionally troubled youngster can only be delivered to the pupil who is there.[5]

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[5] Lest the reader misconstrue this policy for a heartless, negative position, we point out that Alachua County has an Adult Education Program and several state sponsored programs at junior college level that are explicitly oriented toward the needs of the older teen-agers who drop out of school with insufficient vocational and social survival skills. The point is that Alternative School exists to help teen-agers who are severely emotionally disturbed, not to provide a catch-all for every teen-ager who fails to succeed in the regularly provided system or becomes bored with school.

The new and admittedly complex eligibility procedures for admission to Alternative School have already proved their worth. Principals and deans can no longer dump off mild disciplinary cases on a special school center. There can no longer be the helter-skelter sending of all problem pupils of whatever kind, because the home school must now create programs to serve all but the severely emotionally disturbed (who go to Alternative School) the trainable-mentally retarded, and the hearing impaired (both of whom go to another special education center). The emotionally disturbed pupils whose syndrome consists of extreme withdrawal or avoidance behaviors are now staffed for Alternative School, where formally the word "disturbed" was almost synonymous with "delinquent" and connoted pupils of crude, physically aggressive behavior.

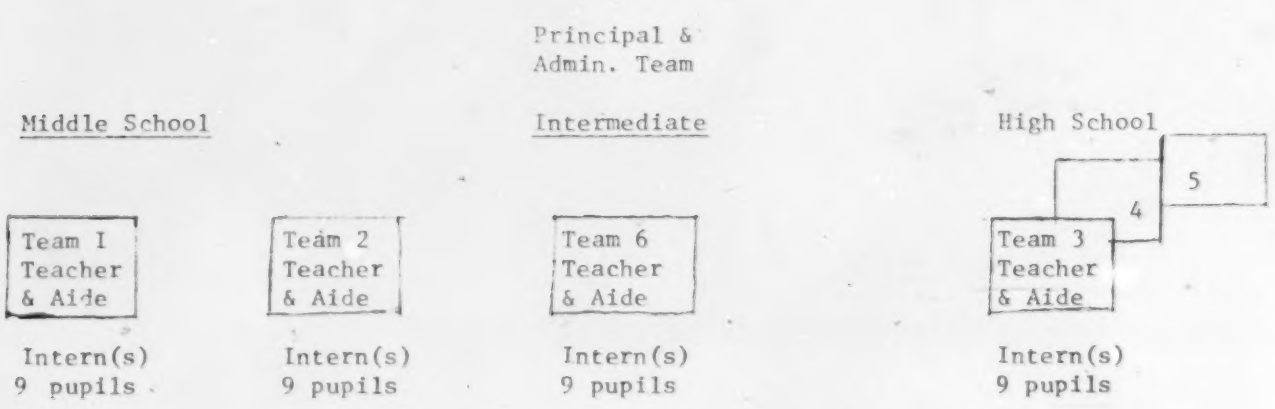
The daily administrative regimen of Alternative School should be examined next in order to lay a framework for describing its program. Pupils are admitted via an initial conference between the principal, the parent or guardian, the agency counselor (about two-thirds of the pupils have a formal relationship with a social, legal, or mental health agency), and the homeroom teacher assigned to the case. At this conference, basic guidelines are laid down and the parents are strongly invited to provide the homelife support for a planned matrix of activities with which to alter the pupil's thinking and behavior. Due to the de-personalization in the large schools, resulting more from sociological factors and funding limitations rather than from anyone's lack of effort, Alternative School usually establishes the first really close relationship with the family which the pupil has known since kindergarten enrollment.

After the parents have demonstrated that they will, indeed, get their child to school for a few days, the pupil is assigned an individual bus schedule on the school district bus fleet, if he is reliable about getting on the bus and does not menace others while riding. Otherwise, the parents are told via administrative action of the School Board that they will have to transport their child to and from Alternative School, or arrange for transportation themselves. This group constitutes only four or five pupils whose behavior is extremely disruptive and physically

dangerous to other children. To assist hardship cases, such as low income parents in a remote rural zone, the school obtains help in securing private transportation through volunteer resource agencies.

The school day at Alternative School is from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M.. Every minute of pupil time is under the close supervision of two adults. Breaks and bathroom privileges are supervised and planned as part of the behavior modification system. Since the school is too small to operate its own lunchroom, the entire student body and faculty are transported at noon in two buses to a nearby elementary school. Classes go through the cafeteria line and sit at assigned tables in a family group.

The staff of Alternative School is set up in a way which attempts to capture the best of the self-contained classroom system and the departmentalized system. It is assumed from the outset that each pupil needs continuous social supervision, and that one certified teacher should be held accountable for the monitoring and development of each pupil. But it is also recognized that teaching and counseling are personal arts, so that pupils relate with varying effectiveness to different adults, and it is also true that teachers have different strengths and weaknesses in the skill fields which have to be offered.



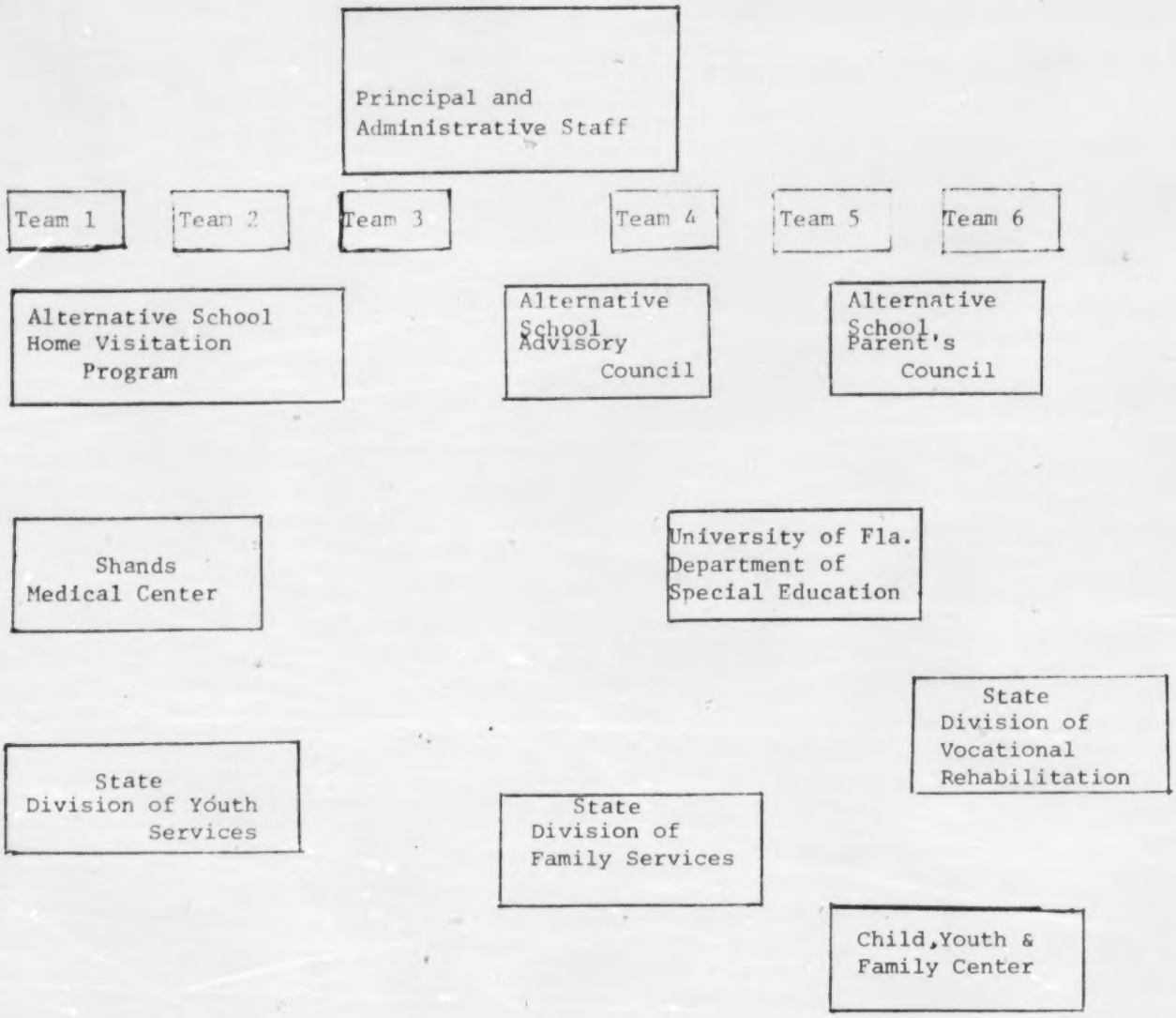
Consequently, the staff and pupils are structured in a way which tries to maximize all these considerations. Each certified teacher has a full-time teacher aide assigned permanently, and one or more teaching or counseling interns assigned on a part-time basis each quarter from the University of Florida. Two of these

teams are designated as middle school, one as transitional (physically large, early teen youngsters who would normally bully middle school children), and three as high school. To each team are assigned seven to nine pupils as homeroom students. The team leader is responsible for the documentary monitoring and the social, psychological, physical, and scholastic development of the assigned pupils.[6] The schedules are made up so that the pupils spend about 40% of their time with the homeroom team, roughly 40% of the time with the other teams at their own age level, and 20% of the time combined with other pupils (lunch, physical education, field trips) but supervised by the homeroom team. Each certified teacher, using the members of his or her assigned team, teaches one subject to all the pupils of either the middle or high school cluster, plus a variety of special materials to the assigned homeroom pupils.

The Alternative School consciously rejects the notion that behavior and attitude modification can be undertaken seriously by applied tinkering with the six hours of a pupil's life which are under the school's supervision. Consequently, the working day of the staff goes far beyond the traditional six hours. The first hour of each morning is used by the faculty to discuss pupil progress, and to tailor explicit activities and behavioral internventions for that day. The time after the pupils leave is used in conferences with the parents, plus planning for home visitation or parental training sessions, which will be described after an examination of the curriculum.

The Alternative School curriculum is founded upon the premise that academic, social, vocational, and psychological development must be integrated as methods or approaches to all learning activities. Consequently, the subjects taught, by name, do not accurately reflect the full curriculum program. There is a necessity to provide the pupil with a core of state accredited subject matter, however, if the youngster is ever to move on and complete high school.

[6] During its first year of operation, the socio-economic and psychological spectrum of Alternative School pupils was as follows: black-white,50%-50%; boy-girl,65%-35%; middle school-high school,50%-50%; welfare-blue collar-middle class,40%-45%-15%; urban-rural,65%-35%; withdrawn-aggressive,40%-60%; delinquent (legally)-non-delinquent,60%-40%; broken home-natural home, 95%-5%



Every day at Alternative School, each pupil engages in the following subjects: mathematics, reading or language development, science or health, social studies, group counseling, a vocational subject (sewing, cooking, carpentry, typing or drafting), and physical education (group game plus individual exercise). Twice weekly, some kind of humanities is provided, usually water color painting, sketching, music appreciation, or a handicraft.

The level at which each pupil works is determined by testing, both formal and informal, and individual prescription. Since there are usually two or three adults present with seven to nine pupils, the work is highly individualized. Remedial work is done frequently, since, although no mentally retarded pupils are accepted at Alternative School, many pupils are two to six years behind their classmates from the regular school centers.

Many motivational methods and pupil-teacher configurations are employed. The school uses video-tape and other audio-visual devices to augment instruction, but the well known tendency to put the effort into the machines instead of the people is strenuously avoided. Those subjects which absolutely require the pupil to sit still and use pencil and paper or a book are presented in small, carefully measured units. Whenever feasible, pupils learn by using a worksheet, playing a game, or manipulating materials which carry the word and number values to be learned. Social studies are taught as a set of exercises in values clarification, dealing with areas in which the ideas of emotionally disturbed children are frequently so dys-functional that acceptable behavior is difficult. Physical education is approached both as physical development for children whose emotional disorders have retarded their coordination and muscular development, and as competitive team sports which stress inter-dependency and inter-personal relations. Vocational skills are strictly exploratory, being used to awaken a sense of esthetic value in creativity and a set of concepts about how a pupil might later earn a living. In no way is vocational training substituted as a time filling avoidance scheme for pupils who are restless in academic subjects.

Behavior modification is fitted into the entire scheme of activities. Each homeroom teacher operates a point system, used all during the day for a specified set of positive and negative behaviors. Reinforcing the reward and penalty system is a short-range program of counseling and values clarification. At long range level (daily, weekly) there is scheduled counseling on pre-determined

subjects, and there are scheduled periods for using the points earned to buy activities or merchandise. By dealing with both the environment which surrounds the pupil at the same time that feelings are verbalized, internalized, or clarified, the program resolves the philosophical tensions between the advocates of Skinner, Lindsley, and Hewett, and those of Glasor, Maslow, and Rogers. Reduced to a simple, philosophical statement, the Alternative School operates upon the premise that an emotionally disturbed teen-ager needs a carefully planned, structured environment which receives controlled stimulii and possesses visible boundaries, and that this environment must be carefully harmonized with a set of feelings and a self-concept which are acceptable to the youngster and capable of transmission to other people.

Two factors which add greatly to the depth of the Alternative School program are parental involvement and agency participation. Many parents who have pupils at Alternative School either possess serious emotional problems of their own, or are trapped in a social or economic situation which greatly limits their ability to raise a troubled son or daughter. A few are foster parents who receive modest state stipends for maintaining a delinquent or dependent child in their homes.

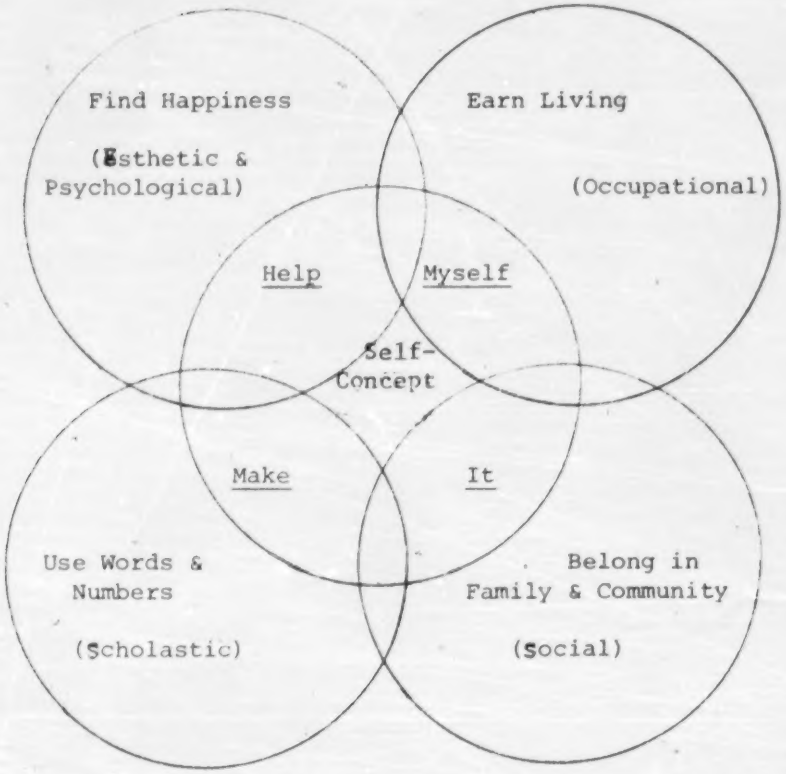
During the first week when a pupil is assigned, the homeroom teacher and teacher aide visits the family at home, usually during the evening hours. If the family can possibly manage it, the point system of behavior modification, or a simpler program of rewards, deprivations, and limits, is set up. Means are established for the teacher and the parent to communicate nearly every day, either by sending a note home with the pupil or by telephone call. Some parents are reached through their place of employment.

After the initial encounter, the parents are visited by someone from the school about twice monthly. They are invited to visit the school informally on a regular basis (about one-half actually do), and once a month for a formal

training session (in which about two-thirds actually participate). When there is an agency counselor, the teacher visits the parents with this counselor so that all advice and procedures are coordinated. The Alternative School staff perceives a considerable correlation between the degree of parental involvement and support for the program, and the extent of the pupil's improvement.

Alternative School

Functional Philosophy



The other important feature of the program's community base is a carefully articulated understanding with each counselor or caseworker from the social, legal, and mental health agencies. Troubled adolescents sometimes manipulate administratively complex situations in order to escape school attendance on a basis which appears legal or necessary. Agency counselors, school teachers, and

parents usually have an incorrect or partially informed perception of each other's roles. To avoid these problems, and to maximize services from the many fine agencies available to children in Alachua County, several techniques are used.

Agency counselors[7] are involved regularly in staff progress conferences on pupil development. Counselors sometimes make the home visits with the Alternative School teacher. Homelife rules and management systems are made up jointly by agency counselors and Alternative School teachers in order to insure mutual support and consistency. Teachers from Alternative School and other agencies in mental health and juvenile affairs are traded on a formal basis periodically under the Swap-A-Professional Program. Under this arrangement, a teacher spends a full day at another agency, working directly with a professional counterpart. A few days later, the counterpart works a full day at Alternative School with the same teacher who previously came to his or her agency. Both professionals then write a joint report on the experience and summarize the lessons learned. Backing up the parental and agency contact programs is the Alternative School Advisory Board, which consists of fifteen middle management people from the entire spectrum of special education and human services delivery. The Board meets once monthly and serves both to advise the school and coordinate its programs with their own activities.

A final important feature of the Alternative School program is written accountability by the homeroom teacher. A behavioral observation reporting form is filled out on each child daily, and a written note goes home to parent or guardian on most days. A six week goals and strategy plan is written for each child, six times a year. To supplement the regular school district grade card which goes out each six weeks, there is a detailed behavioral and academic progress report. Psychological battery testing and comprehensive academic

[7] Most of these personnel are from: State Division of Youth Services (juvenile delinquency management agency); State Division of Family Services (juvenile dependency management agency); Child, Youth, and Family Center (a public psychological counseling agency); State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (for subsidized job training); Center for Human Development (a University of Florida College of Medicine residential school for juvenile psychiatric patients); and Alachua County Sheriff's Office and Gainesville Police Department (juvenile affairs sections).

evaluation occur twice yearly. The President's Council on Physical Fitness standard test is given twice yearly. Perhaps most important, the parents are made aware of these evaluations as they occur.

Probably one-half of the Alternative School's pupils will be returned to a regular school center at the end of one year, although they would mostly be assigned to an emotionally disturbed program of the resource room type within the home school center. The remaining pupils will either stay at Alternative School for a second year or progress outward to an experience such as the Adult Education Center, a subsidized work training program, or the Santa Fe Community College manpower training program. No miracle cures are anticipated, but substantially better attitudes, behavior, work skills, and scholastic skills are already visible at the end of the first school year. After four years' trial and error and some lessons learned in the school of hard knocks, the Alachua County Public Schools are providing an effective spectrum of services for emotionally disturbed youth. The apex of this system is the highly structured and community based Alternative School.

5 Keys to Alternative School Program

1. Competent selection and placement system.
2. Adequate number of competent personnel.
3. Integrated curriculum:
   academic, vocational, physical,
   esthetic, & psychological
4. Community base: family and all agencies.
5. Component in a spectrum of educational services.

It is useful to sum up the lessons learned in arriving at the present configuration. First, rapid social change has a great positive potential for the majority of pupils, but the problems of disturbed children from weak, neglectful homes are exacerbated.

Second, attempts to put all the problem pupils at teen-age level into one center will probably fail, unless there are strongly enforced guidelines to insure that only children with genuine emotional disorders and behavioral problems are selected.

Third, a strong, well-trained, and numerically adequate staff are absolutely essential in operating a successful center for disturbed teen-agers.

Fourth, a center for emotionally disturbed teen-agers should rest upon a solid foundation of supporting classes, staff specialists, and closely coordinated supporting programs of community service.

Fifth, educating seriously dysfunctional youth by treating only their school attendance hours is of questionable value. A successful program must intervene deeply into the homelife and community system in which the pupil lives.

Sixth, programs for emotionally disturbed teen-agers demand control and support by administrators who have a firm mastery of special education, community systems and agencies, and juvenile law.

While the temporary disruptions of racial integration, rapid population growth, and expanded youth rights presented some serious problems for emotionally disturbed youth of Alachua County, some positive remedial systems have been forged amid the flames of rapid social change.

August 12, 1975

MEMO: Annual Progress Report, Alternative School (Secondary Center for Exceptional Child Education) School Plant #0052, Alachua County Public Schools; 1108 N. W. 7th Avenue, Gainesville, Fla. 32601

TO: Superintendent James W. Longstreth

FROM: Russell W.Ramsey, Principal

BACKGROUND: In the spring of 1974, the School Board of Alachua County decided to improve upon its program for educating disruptive and dysfunctional pupils. Following sessions between the middle school and secondary principals and the curriculum staff, it was decided that the Mountain Top program then in operation to serve this function was inadequate. The program, then in its fourth year, was set up to serve disruptive students who could not handle racial integration. The criteria for sending students were vague, and the students only stayed about one month on the average. Furthermore, after the first two years of its existence, the Mountain Top School increasingly lost its original identity as an in-house suspension center for youngsters engaging in racial violence, and became the catch-all for problem adolescents of all categories: drug users, dropouts, gang fighters, teacher hitters, truants, emotionally disturbed, and more. The School Board decided to take advantage of the excellent funding formula available under the Emotionally Disturbed and Socially Maladjusted categories of the 1973 Florida Full Time Equivalent pupil formula.

In May, 1974, I was assigned by the Superintendent to be the Principal, and the name "Alternative School" was chosen by the Asst. Supt. for Curriculum with a view towards popular use of a non-stigmatizing name. A sum of $130,000 was placed in the budget for planning purposes, and a tentative number of five certified teachers, to be supported by teacher aides, was established for planning purposes. Dr. Gerry Combs, a psychologist from the Pupil Personnel Department, and Mrs. Jane Nelson, Assistant Director of Exceptional Child Education for Emotionally Dis[illegible]nd Specific Learning Disabilities Programs, were detailed from the [illegible] staff to render guidance and assistance. These two persons made valuable contributions and supported the program in many important ways during the formative months.

The facility assigned was the former Lincoln Elementary School (from 1946-1956), known later as the Elementary Wing of the A. Quinn Jones Center. The building was not in good shape, and the Facilities Division did a wonderful job of bringing its eight rooms up to usable standard by the opening of school in September. Each room was air conditioned, and the lavatories were repaired so that each of the seven classrooms had its own internal closet, toilets, and sink.

One room was set up as a combined administrative unit and teacher conference area. A custodian and a secretary both having a proven record of patience and acceptance of difficult teen-agers were chosen and brought

on duty. Five teachers and five teacher aides were hired and assigned in teams, so that one white and one black would be on each team, and four of the teams would have a man and a woman, the fifth consisting of two men. Intensive staff training was initiated, utilizing helping service both from the county staff and from the Emotionally Disturbed Education Program at the University of Florida Department of Special Education. The assistance given by Dr. Lyndal Bullock, director of this program, can hardly be overestimated. Those teachers who were not already certified in emotionally disturbed education were enrolled in the master's program under his supervision, and immediate arrangements were made to receive and utilize several interns and practicum students each term from the same program. This arrangement provided valuable on-the-job training with seriously disturbed youngsters in a controlled atmosphere, and at the same time the services of the Alternative School were greatly strengthened.

After the first week of the school year, the students were fed in gradually, so that procedures and curriculum were improved gradually by the time the shcool reached its full assigned capacity (55) just after Christmas.

STUDENT LOAD: One of the biggest advances in special education for Alachua County was the selection and placement of students in the Alternative School. The staff had a conference with Mr. Bob Connors, the Emotionally Disturbed Education program consultant from the State Department of Education, prior to the opening of school, and agreed that strict admissions procedures were necessary to prevent the school from being used as a dumping ground for all kinds of problem pupils, rather than as a rehabilitative center for adolescents having genuine emotional disorders.

An elaborate staffing and review procedure was established, with the Director of Exceptional Child Education having the authority to sign eligibility certificates, after staffing conferences and psychological testing. As a result, only about three of the sixty-three children referred to the Alternative School during the school year were of questionable selection, namely, children who committed a single act of violence or disruption which should have been treated under juvenile law instead of the exceptional child education realm. Three more of the 63 pupils assigned failed to show up because they were of legal age to quit school and simply did not care to submit to behavior modification. A case load of 57 pupils, therefore, actually attended the Alternative School during significant parts of the school year. These were distributed equally through grades 6-10, with two 11th graders attending voluntarily. The black-white ratio was 50-50%; the boy-girl ratio was 70-30%. About 20% of the pupils came from professional families; 50% were from lower middle or blue collar families; and 30% were in the low income category, a few of these being on welfare. Only one child in the program was the natural offspring of the mother and father with whom he or she was residing. All the rest were from broken homes of some configuration; 50% were from poorly governed homes and could easily be categorized as neglected children. Some 50% were clients of the Division of Youth Services, mostly under the Child in Need of Supervision category; 25% were clients of the Division of Family Services, mostly under

the neglected or dependent child category. About 35% of the pupils were enrolled as clients of the Division of Mental Health, some of these also being Youth Services or Family Services clients. Some 15% of the pupils were present or former patients of the child psychiatry program at the University of Florida Shands Teaching Hospital.

With regard to refinement of exceptional child education categories, only three of the pupils sent to Alternative School were, after re-testing and continuous evaluation, socially maladjusted children. All the rest were severely emotionally disturbed, with syndromes ranging across the whole spectrum; epilepsy, brain damage resulting from accident or disease, environmental patterning resulting in emotional disorder, victims of traumatic incidents in early childhood, and hereditary problems. Ten of the children were considered by the staff to be so severe in their disorders that they would have been institutional residents in most any community in the nation, and these children were kept in the outreach treatment posture only with the greatest degree of supervision and careful coordination between staff and foster family or guardian.

In general, it could be said that the students who attended Alternative School were a good deal more behaviorally disordered than any children who are served by most public school districts.

SCHOOL YEAR DEVELOPMENTS: As the school year developed, it was found advisable to have Alternative School personnel attend the staffings at the parent schools from which the children were being referred. A number of training sessions for teachers in the school district and for university students at the University of Florida's College of Education were conducted by Alternative School personnel; the topic was how to identify and handle the emotionally disturbed child in the school setting. In the fall of 1974, an advisory council was formed, consisting of persons from mental health, law enforcement, government, education, and social services. A parental training council was also formed, except that Alternative School altered the system used in the other schools where the parental council has an advisory character. Because of the highly specialized character of the Alternative School's function, and because of the fact that many of the parents themselves are clients of the social service agencies, Alternative School drew its policy advice from its policy board of experts, and utilized its parental council in a frank training role.

In early January, enrollment appeared to be rising too high, and an analysis of remaining budgetary resources was conducted. It was decided to forego purchase of any more new apparatus, and install a sixth teaching team. Another teacher and teacher aide were hired and paired up with a counterpart who already was on the staff in order not to put two new personnel in charge of one classroom.

In April, admissions to the school were closed because enrollment had reached sixty, with several more referrals in the staffing system. Also, a limited effort was made to put three older students out into the community on part-time jobs, and three students who had made great progress were put back into their schools of origin on a test basis, successfully. Another

highlight in April was the presentation about Alternative School to the annual international convention of the Council for Exceptional Children at the Los Angeles Civic Center. The school was high-lighted along with the other community based models for the treatment of disturbed and/or dysfunctional youth before a large audience of professionals from all over the United States and several foreign countries. As a result, requests for information upon which to base a similar institution poured in by the dozens.

In June, when the regular school year ended, Alternative School had proved the point that adequate, well-trained staff configured into a complete community treatment model can indeed effect dramatic changes in the thinking and behavior of previously ungovernable and ineducable youth, without resorting to the conisderable expense of institutional commitment.

During June and July, 1975, some 20 of the Alternative School's regular pupils attended on a half-time basis for summer school. Three teachers and three teacher aides from the regular staff were used for this purpose. The school also allowed the use of its resources for a model summer program for emotionally disturbed elementary children. This program was conducted by Dr. Lyndal Bullock, using 60 elementary children selected from the Alachua County Public Schools. The pupils had to provide their own transportation (their mothers, in most cases); the teachers were 25 master's candidates in Emotionally Disturbed Education, closely supervised by the two doctoral candidates and Dr. Bullock himself, whose inspiring leadership had to be seen to be fully appreciated. By this means the people of Alachua County received, for about $300 worth of utilities, a summer school experience for 60 children having great need. And the quality of the program could not have been improved by a staff of fully salaried professionals.

Other highlights of the year included a presentation about the program to the School Board in January, 1975; visits by several prominent educators; and appearances by staff members at the Florida State Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children.

CURRICULUM: From the beginning, an effort was made to provide a full, normal curriculum at the appropriate grade level for each youngster. The certified teacher functioned as team leader over the teacher aide, the intern or practicum students assigned at that time, and a unit of eight or nine pupils. The team leader was responsible to insure that each day there were units of math, English or language, science or health, social studies, vocational exploratory, and physical education. In addition, each teacher was allowed to conduct a counseling period and some kind of a values clarification or group communications period with the home room each day. The esthetic, the occupational, the academic, the social, and the physical aspects of each subject were integrated continuously, so that, for example, a math lesson might include a lesson in adding up the score, and a carpentry activity might include a unit in reading from an instructional manual. The emphasis upon pinpoint teaching to the exact needs of each child was continuous.

COMMUNITY BASE: The vital phase was created in three ways. Every possible agency offering a social, medical, vocational, educational, or avocational service was brought into the teaching picture. Many tiems there were five or six adults from outside agencies working right in the school, and many times teachers and counselors from service agencies visited the students' homes after hours. The family was involved in the process in ways, and to

a degree which broke pioneer ground for a public school based program. The parents were pressured strongly into coming in for monthly sessions in which they were, quite frankly, trained in how to handle their children. Teachers visited in the homes, making homelife governance plans for reinforcement of good attitudes and behavior taught and encouraged within the school environment. The school system, itself, built up, during school year 1974-1975, a comprehensive network of classes for emotionally disturbed children at all levels, so that the Alternative School was only dealing with children who were unable to profit, or who were unmanageable, in special classes within regular school centers. These three components of the program, together with the full-blown and sophisticated participation by interns and practicum students from several academic disciplines besides emotionally disturbed education, made the Alternative School a truly pioneer institution, with capabilities far beyond the apparent simplicity of tis little red schoolhouse appearance.

LOGISTICS: The Transportation Department gave the Alternative School superlative support. About one-third of its pupils rode in daily on a complex, individually tailored bus arrangement which involved in some cases, three different buses, both to and from school. About one-half of the pupils rode a regular school bus on a route with in the urban area of Gainesville, and the remainder either used family transportation or walked. The cooperation and efficiency of the bus system in providing rides, and the patience and skill of the drivers in handling the difficult, unpredictable behavior of the Alternative School children were altogether remarkable.

The Principal of Kirby Smith Elementary School agreed to provide lunch for the Alternative School. Two buses daily took the entire staff and student body of the school to the Kirby Smith building and back. The staff had to eat with, and constantly supervise, the pupils; on many occasions their behavior was so physically unruly that two to four staff members had to physically restrain children for the entire lunch period. The lunchroom personnel bent over backwards to be kind and understanding to the students, who were frequently abusive, violent, and vulgar in their behavior. Again, the lunchroom staff, like the bus drivers, deserve utmost praise for their tolerance and patience.

Facilities maintenance was outstanding throughout the year. They responded repeatedly, on short notice, to repair damage from neighborhood vandalism, student roughness with equipment, and operational wear and tear.

Learning Resources personnel from the Curriculum Department did outstanding work. They produced a fine videotape on one hour of selected student behaviors for staff training purposes. They frequently provided the school with equipment and repairs of equipment, on short notice, when students had damaged the school's own equipment.

All other services provided the school in its first year were excellent. Only those which exerted some special efforts because of the problem pupils kept in the school have been singled out for special mention, but many other employyes of the Alachua County Public Schools gave valuable help to the Alternative School.

MEASURED IMPROVEMENT IN THE PUPILS: While behavioral objectives for severely disturbed boys and girls with a wide range of disorders are hard to write and harder to measure, we can set a few parameters and evaluate the progress. It was decided by the staff that two areas of utmost concentration would be reading skills and impulse control. The average pupil gained about three school years in reading skill. While only about one-half of the pupils had serious or fairly serious loss of self-governance about 10-15 times during each school day. By May, none were acting out in a serious, quick impulse manner more than once or twice weekly, and parents of these same children reported comparable changes in their behavior at home. Most students gained about two years in math skills; all of them learned the foundations for four manual skills (chosen from among carpentry, horticulture, sewing, cooking, typing, and drafting). Attitudinal change about occupations was strong. At the time of arrival, less than 10% of the students thought that they had any interest in earning a living. Most simply responded that they could "get money if they had to," and none could name an occupation in which they were genuinely interested. By end of the year, all students could discuss several occupations meaningfully, and 80% said that they definitely wanted to take training in some field and get a job in it as soon as possible. There was also much attitudinal change about the subject of recognizing the students' own problems in mental health. Virtually every student said, upon being assigned, that he or she "hadn't done nuthin'" to merit being sent to a special center; most blamed a prejudiced teacher or "a big hassle at home." By year's end, every pupil could identify his or her own deficiencies in the mental health realm, most accepted the fact of owning an emotional disorder and could usually talk about it. The majority of parents expressed great pleasure in the fact that their child was more open, less angry, more cooperative within the family, less inclined to sulk, to steal, to run away, or to pick on siblings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The School Board of Alachua County, by taking a stand in favor of an often unpopular and generally neglected area of public education during a bedgetarily tight period, has filled a great educational and moral need within the county.
2. Adequate, well trained staff are an absolute necessity; two adults with a maximum of nine or ten emotionally disturbed adolescents is the outside maximum ratio for control and meaningful change.
3. The community base is necessary to obtain the extra-school day controls and changes which are needed to change the youngster. This base comes from having enough staff and a staff attitude which invites participation without jealousy, and with a firm understanding of other agencies' roles.
4. The Emotionally Disturbed category gives adequate funding and adequate safeguards to prevent its being used as a dumping category for all kinds of pupils who are irritating to staff in a regular school center. The Socially Maladjusted category is all right for internal class units within the school centers, but it is funded too low and controlled too vaguely for good professional use in a fulltime center program.
5. Teachers and administrators throughout the system need continuous training in discipline, and in handling and identifying symptoms of emotional disorder among the children in their classrooms.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

ALACHUA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1108 N. W. 7th Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601

Phone: 904-377-5256
904-373-5192, Ext. 240

ANNUAL REPORT, ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

School year 1975-76 was the second year of operations for the Alternative School. Founded in July, 1974, the school is a secondary and middle school center for emtotionally disturbed adolescents.

STAFF: The Alternative School operated this year with five teaching teams, each consisting of a team leader, an aide, and one or two interns. A sixth teaching team was placed at the Regional Detention Center on interlocal agreement with the Detention Branch of the Florida State Division of Youth Services. Pupils served there are classified as socially maladjusted, based upon detention status within the juvenile justice system. As in the first year of operation, the principal, secretary, and custodian each performed one or more units of vocational education and provided backup assistance in pupil behavior management. One teacher aide was added to the staff this year to provide part-time job placement and supervision service, primarily for older pupils who were in their second year at Alternative School.

BUDGET: The Alternative School was capped this year at a funding level which worked out to an FTE factor of 2.8 instead of the 3.7 which is authorized for E.D. pupils. In addition, a small number of socially maladjusted pupils were assigned to Alternative School (average of 10 out of 75 pupils). These socially maladjusted pupils earn at an FTE ratio of 2.3. By utilizing donated vocational materials and practicing rigid economies in utilities, the school was able to retain its character as an essentially emotionally disturbed program, rather than reducing service level to that of a socially maladjusted program.

PUPILS: The Alternative School operated with a base of 75 pupils this year. There were substantial gains in the quality of the district-wide selection and placement system. Virtually all of the pupils were channeled in by the Director of Exceptional Student Education to Alternative School from the ED I class in the pupil's regularly assigned school center. And there was substantial growth in district-wide recognition that the Alternative School exists for pupils with a psychologically verified emotional disorder rather than as a behavior consequence for pupils who commit delinquent acts in the regular school centers. The pupil composition was approximately 60% Caucasion-40% Negro, with family income distribution reasonably tracking the district at large. There remained twice as many boys as girls. The pupils were equally distributed through grade levels 6 through 10, with a small number of 11th and 12th graders. Behaviorally, about one-third of the pupils were remarkable for aggressive-hyperactive behaviors, about one-third for introverted-withdrawn behaviors, and the remaining one-third non-remarkable in this way. Legally, about one-fourth of the pupils were clients of the State Department of Youth Services (for juvenile delinquents) and another one-fourth clients of the State Department of Social and Economic Services (for juvenile dependents).

SYSTEM GROWTH: The Alachua County Public Schools developed its Emotionally Disturbed Education system substantially, with resulting improvements visible at the Alternative School. The State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services continued to provide outstanding service, both crisis and long range, for the Alternative School. The Juvenile Judge of the 8th Judicial Circuit made every possible concession to strengthen and support the program. The Shands Teaching Hospital, the Department of Special Education E.D. teacher training program at the University of Florida, several programs at Santa Fe Community College, the State's Attorney Office, the Public Defenders Office, the Chamber of Commerce, the Gainesville Police Department, and the Alachua County Sheriff's Office all continued to render valuable support. These agencies not only facilitate the Alternative School program, but, indeed, make it possible to exist in its present form. The staff director of Exceptional Child Education continued to offer leadership in ascertaining that only those pupils properly certified for eligibility could be assigned. The staff psychologist offered a wide range of valuable staff support, without which the program could not operate. The parents of the pupils met once monthly with staff members to learn more about dealing with an emotionally disturbed child. Each teacher made a minimum of four home visits to the families of their regularly assigned pupils.

CURRICULUM: The Alternative School continued this year to offer a full scholastic program (math, science, English, social studies) plus physical education, a vocational exploratory wheel (carpentry, cooking, typing, art, horticulture, consumerism) and one counseling period daily. In addition, the school became the first public school in Florida to offer the National Youth Program Using Minibikes (NYPUM). Under this program, the Honda Corporation of America placed 16 minibikes through the Atlanta office of the YMCA with Alternative School. One teacher and one aide take 16 competitively selected pupils twice weekly to the Driver's Education Range for precision drill on the minibikes. Pupils not only earn their way into the program, but also must retain the right to participate by meeting behavioral goals. An impressive amount of community support was obtained to get this program started. Other plans to devise new specialized curriculum for E.D. pupils had to be curtailed this year for budgetary reasons.

LOGISTICS: This year the Alternative School moved from Kirby-Smith Elementary School to the Sidney Lanier Special Education Center for the noon meal. Two buses came each day at 11:15 A.M. and took the entire school, the teachers and aides eating with their homeroom pupils, as a group and returning to Alternative School at 12:00 noon. The food service at Sidney Lanier Special Education Center was excellent; social problems were minimized by bringing the Alternative School children to the lunchroom at a different time from the children at that school center.

Bus service was provided from many far-flung points around the county by the Alachua County Public School bus fleet. Several drivers and the administrative personnel at the Transportation Department went out of their way to accomodate individual pupils' needs in getting to school, and in helping deal with the behaviors of some of the more difficult pupils at Alternative School. A few Alternative School pupils were transported all year by their parents or rode the Regional Transportation System buses.

Vandalism against the building by neighborhood children was the lowest in several years. Service by the Maintenance Department remained at the customary high level of excellence.

FUTURE DIRECTION: The Alternative School is recommended for award of a $50,000 facilities development grant from the LEAA (Law Enforcement Assistance Act) in late 1976 or early 1977. The grant would enable the Alternative School to maintain about 20 of its pupils in residential status in the facility, funded jointly by the State Department of Education (under the E.D. FTE category) and the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (under the delinquent or dependent children's category). This would be a novel, but highly effective role, for the Alternative School to assume.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Alternative School should be continued for school year 1976-77 in its present configuration, with as full a funding (up to 3.7) as the state will allow.
2. Enrollment should be capped at about 75 pupils. This keeps about 20% of the E.D. pupils in the district in a self-contained status, the remainder in the resource room status, and the total at roughly the national prevalency level (1%-1.5%).
3. The district should proceed with plans to expand operations into a partially residential facility.
4. The Attendance Department and the Regional Detention Center program can remain functionally under Alternative School administration.
5. The existing strict procedure to prevent mal-assignment of pupils is important and should be continued.